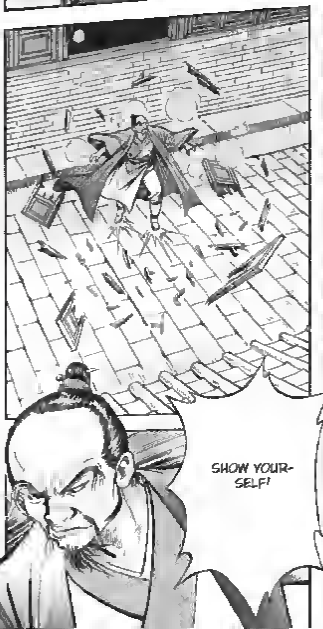
CH.14: THE HUNCHBACK OF THE NORTH

第十四話 塞北明駝

"ASSES ON THE GROUND, ROLLING BACKWARDS TO FELL GEESE" TECHNIQUE! HAHAHA!!


SHOW YOURSELF!

WHO DARES?!

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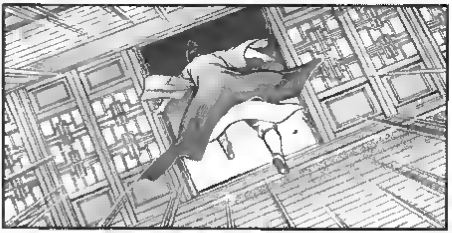

WHAT'S GOING ON? WHAT'S HAPPENED?
嘭!
嘭!

嘭!

THERE'S NO WAY HE COULD HAVE DISAPPEARED SO QUICKLY
HE'S MOST LIKELY STILL SOMEWHERE WITHIN THE HALL

SHIDI AND I WENT OUTSIDE TO TAKE A LEAK. I JUST FELT NUMBNESS ON MY BACK, AND THEN FELL INTO THAT BASTARD'S HANDS.
JI REN TONG
SHEN REN JUN

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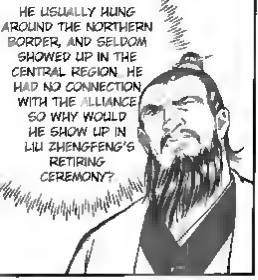
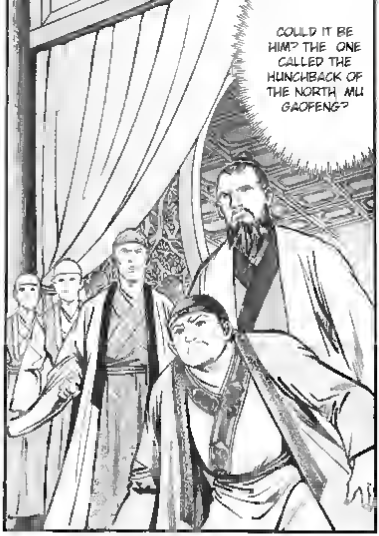
啊呀！

WHAT?!
WHO...?!
WHO ARE YOU? SKULKING AROUND LIKE A RAT LIKE THAT?!
WHERE DO YOU THINK YOU'RE GOING!


HE USUALLY HUNG AROUND THE NORTHERN BORDER, AND SELDOM SHOWED UP IN THE CENTRAL REGION. HE HAD NO CONNECTION WITH THE ALLIANCE. SO WHY WOULD HE SHOW UP IN LIU ZHENGFENG'S RETIRING CEREMONY?

BUT IF IT WERE NOT HIM, WHO? I DOUBT THERE'S ANY OTHER NOTABLY UGLY HUNCHBACK WITH THAT LEVEL OF SKILLS.


COULD IT BE HIM? THE ONE CALLED THE HUNCHBACK OF THE NORTH, MU GAOFENG?

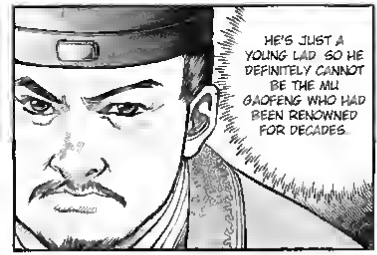
I AM LIU ZHENGFENG AND YOU ARE...?

MASTER LIU, IS HE YOUR GUEST?

MASTER MU IS YOUR...?

I'M...

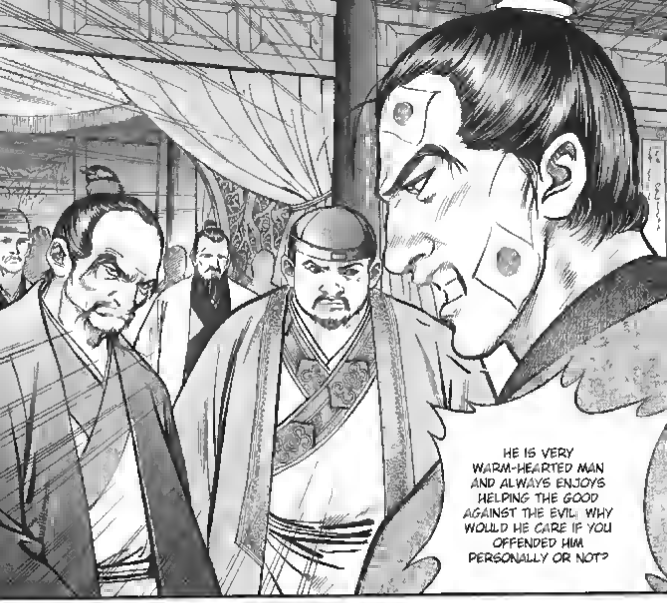
IF I TAKE HALF THE CHARACTER FROM MY FAMILY NAME LIN, IT'S THE CHARACTER MU.
MASTER MU...?


HE'S JUST A YOUNG LAD SO HE DEFINITELY CANNOT BE THE MU GAOFENG WHO HAD BEEN RENOWNED FOR DECADES.

MY NAME IS MU.

MAY I ENQUIRE UPON HOW YOU'RE RELATED TO THE HUNCH-BACK OF THE NORTH?
WELCOME MR MU.

HE'S ... HE'S MY SENIOR.
I HAVE NEVER HEARD OF THIS 'HUNCHBACK OF THE NORTH' MASTER MU BEFORE, BUT BY THE SOUND OF IT, THE MAN CERTAINLY HAD QUITE A REPUTATION.
ALSO, THAT YU CANGHAI IS STILL GLARING AT ME WITH A FIERCE LOOK ON HIS FACE; IF HE FOUND OUT MY TRUE IDENTITY, YU CANGHAI WOULD PROBABLY KILL ME WITHOUT BATTING AN EYELASH.
QINGCHENG SECT HAS COMMITTED UNRIGHTEOUS DEEDS AND HERO MU HAPPENED TO CATCH THEM, SO OF COURSE HE INTERFERES
QINGCHENG SECT HAS NEVER CROSSED PATHS WITH MR. MU OF THE NORTH. I WONDER HOW WE HAVE OFFENDED YOU?


HE IS VERY WARM-HEARTED MAN AND ALWAYS ENJOYS HELPING THE GOOD AGAINST THE EVIL. WHY WOULD HE CARE IF YOU OFFENDED HIM PERSONALLY OR NOT?

SO FOR THIS LAD TO BE THINKING SO HIGHLY OF HIM, HE MIGHT REALLY BE FROM HIS CLAN

ALTHOUGH MU BAOFENG HAS HIGH MARTIAL ARTS SKILLS, HIS MORAL STANDING WAS NOT PARTICULARLY GOOD AT ALL. THIS MAN CURRIED FAVOR WITH THE POWERFUL AND NEVER KEPT HIS PROMISES.
BUT HE WAS VERY SKILLED AND WAS ALWAYS ALERT AND CAREFUL, SO IF ONE EVER OFFENDED HIM, IT WOULD BE IMPOSSIBLE TO GUARD AGAINST HIM. THAT WAS WHY ALTHOUGH PEOPLE IN THE PUGILISTS' REALM MIGHT BE AFRAID OF HIM, NO ONE REALLY HAD ANY RESPECT FOR HIM.

BULLSHIT! YOU'RE JUST ASKING FOR IT, AREN'T YOU, YOU LITTLE SHIT!
MEN, SERVE THE DRINKS!
NOW, NOW, MASTER YU, BROTHER MU, BOTH OF YOU ARE RESPECTFUL GUESTS IN MY HUMBLE PLACE. PLEASE, FOR THAT SAKE, LET'S DRINK A FRIENDLY SHOT OF WINE!

THIS IS PREPOSTEROUS! AND WHAT'S WITH THAT HATE-FILLED LOOKED ON HIS FACE!

ALRIGHT, ALRIGHT, ALRIGHT! OUT OF RESPECT FOR MASTER LIU NO ONE WILL CAUSE ANY TROUBLE IN THE LIU HOUSE BROTHER MU, LET US GET TO KNOW EACH OTHER
I'LL MAKE YOU BEG FOR FORGIVENESS!

THE LAD MUST BE IN GREAT PAIN, BUT HIS FACE REMAINED DEFIANT AND DID NOT SHOW ANY SIGN OF GIVING IN. HE'S GOT GUTS, BUT AT THIS RATE, HIS WRIST IS GOING TO BE A GONER!

WHY ARE YOU SO EAGER TO PICK ON MU GAOFENG'S CLANSMAN?
MASTER YU

HUNCHBACK OF THE NORTH.
塞北明駝
MU GAO FENG

IT'S MU GAOFENG, THE HUNCHBACK OF THE NORTH!
GOOD LAD, GOOD LAD! BRAGGING FOR YOUR GRANDPA BY SAYING THINGS LIKE HELPING THE GOOD GUYS AGAINST THE EVIL AND SO ON HOW WONDERFUL! I REALLY ENJOYED IT!

THIS HUNCHBACK'S INTERNAL ENERGY IS A FORCE TO BE RECKONED WITH! HE ALMOST BLEW MY ARM OFF BY SHEER IMPACT!

FINE, TAKE THIS, 10% OF MY REAL POWER.
THIS YU CHANGHAI HE MANAGED TO HOLD HIS GROUND HE S MARTIAL ARTS IS NO JOKE!
ドガ

HAAH!
I-IT HURTS... IT FEELS AS THOUGH MY INTERNAL ORGANS ARE CHURNING VIOLENTLY!!

THEY'RE GOING TO BREAK THE LAD'S BODY WITH THE WAY THEY'RE FIGHTING IT OUT USING THEIR INTERNAL ENERGY!

YOUR QINGCHENG SECT'S SKILLS ARE TRULY FEEBLE. COMPARED TO THIS HERO MU THE HUNCHBACK OF THE NORTH, YOU ARE BUT A LAGGARD.
THIS HUNCHBACK REALLY LIVES UP TO HIS REPUTATION OF BEING CRUEL AND EVIL. HE WOULD INFLICT INTERNAL DAMAGES TO HIS OWN GRANDSON JUST TO BREAK MY HOLD!
ASK HIM TO TEACH YOU A FEW MOVES, T-THEN...YOU MIGHT...IMPROVE A LITTLE...
I SUGGEST YOU S-SUBMIT YOURSELF UNDER HERO MU AND
I SURE WOULD LIKE TO SEE THEM!
VERY WELL. YOUR SUGGESTION HAS MERIT! SINCE YOU, YOURSELF, ARE STUDYING UNDER MR. MU, YOUR SKILLS MUST BE QUITE REMARKABLE

Ahh

THAT MASTER YU HE WAS BASICALLY TELLING EVERYONE THAT HIS CHALLENGE WAS STRICTLY FOR THAT YOUNG LAD AND THAT MU GAOFENG SHOULD NOT INTERFERE

AS YOUR GRANDPA, I AM OVERJOYED TO HAVE SUCH A HUNCHBACKED AND ALSO HANDSOME GRANDSON. I'D REALLY HATE TO LOSE SUCH A GOOD KID
MY DEAR GRANDSON, I AM AFRAID YOUR SKILLS ARE STILL TOO LOW AND WILL BE NO MATCH FOR THE MASTER OF THE QINGCHENG SECT. HE CAN KILL YOU WITH HIS FIRST MOVE

A WARRIOR CAN BE KILLED BUT NOT BE HUMILIATED! NO WAY I CAN JUST GET ON MY KNEES SO EASILY!

WHY DON'T YOU KNEEL DOWN AND KOWTOW TO YOUR GRANDPA, THEN YOUR GRANDPA WILL TAKE HIM ON FOR YOU HOW DOES THAT SOUND?

HE REALLY MIGHT JUST KILL ME.
BUT IF I FACE THAT YU FELLOW RECKLESSLY.
IF YOU WANT SOMEBODY ELSE TO FIGHT FOR YOU. WHAT'S SO BIG OF A DEAL TO GET DONW ON YOU KNEES A COUPLE OF TIMES? HAHAHAHA!
HEH, NO GUTS AFTER ALL!
WHO WILL AVENGE THE LIN FAMILY?
BUT I DIE NOW. WHO WILL SAVE MY PARENTS?

THERE'S NO SHAME IN SWALLOWING MY PRIDE FOR NOW IN ORDER TO ACHIEVE BETTER RESULTS IN THE FUTURE
A TRUE MAN WILL NOT LET A SMALL SETBACK RUIN HIS MASTER PLAN

GRANDPA, THAT YU CANGHAI UNINHIBITEDLY KILLS INNOCENT PEOPLE AND ROBS THEM OF THEIR BELONGINGS. EVERYONE IN THE MARTIAL ARTS REALM HAS THE RIGHT TO KILL HIM.
啪!
WOULD YOU PLEASE UPHOLD JUSTICE AND RID THIS EVIL FOR ALL THE PEOPLE IN THE PUGILISTS' WORLD?

WHAT ON EARTH IS THEIR RELATIONSHIP? IT'S OBVIOUS THAT MU GAOFENG WASN'T HIS REAL GRANDFATHER AND YET...! PERHAPS HE'S JUST AT HIS WIT'S END AND AFRAID TO DIE BY MY HAND!
AND YET NOW HE'S WILLINGLY GOING DOWN ON HIS KNEES? IS HE REALLY MU GAOFENG'S CLANSMAN AFTER ALL?
JUST NOW THAT LAD ADAMANTLY REFUSED TO BUDGE DESPITE HOW YU CHANGHAI HAS BEEN PRESSURING HIM WITH HIS INTERNAL ENERGY
IF MR. MU WANTS TO PRESENT HIS OUTSTANDING SKILLS IN FRONT OF ALL OUR FRIENDS HERE, I'LL MOST CERTAINLY HAVE TO PLAY ALONG
GOOD BOY, NICE LAD! WHY YOU REALLY WANT TO PLAY HUH?

MEANWHILE, MU GAOFENG IS A HUNCHBACK WITH A REALLY UGLY FACE WHO IS NONETHELESS A MAN WITH DEVASTATINGLY EXPLOSIVE INNER ENERGY THAT IS AS OVERWHELMING AS THUNDER AND LIGHTNING, OR LIKE LANDSLIDES AND TIDAL WAVES. THE SIGHT OF THESE TWO READYING TO FACE OFF INEVITABLY PUTS THE AUDIENCE ON THE EDGE OF THEIR SEATS.

YU CHANGHAI IS BUT A SHORT PRIEST WHO ONLY HAD THE HEIGHT OF A YOUTH, AND PROBABLY WEIGHED ONLY EIGHTY POUNDS. HOWEVER, FROM THE WAY HE STOOD, HE SEEMED TO BE AS STABLE AS A MOUNTAIN, WELL DISPLAYING THE IMPOSING MANNER OF A GREAT MASTER. OBVIOUSLY HE HAD WELL DEVELOPED INNER ENERGY.

WOW SO THIS IS QINGCHENG'S GREAT MOVE 'ASSES ON GROUND, ROLLING BACKWARDS TO FELL GEESE!'
!!
GOD DAMN IT! WHO IS IT!

MOMMY, IT HURTS!

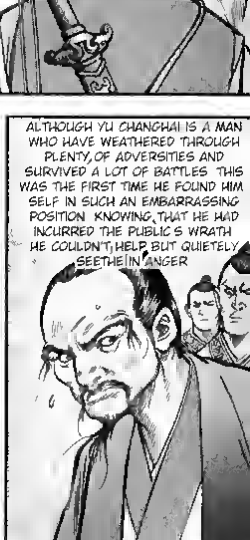
OUCH! IT HURTS!
THIS WAS JUST A LITTLE GIRL. HOW COULD HE HAVE USED SUCH POWER AGAINST HER? IN FRONT OF SO MANY PEOPLE, SUCH BEHAVIOUR REALLY DID NOT FIT WITH HIS IMAGE AS THE MASTER OF THE QINGCHENG SECT.

YU CANGHAI WAS STARTLED. AFTER HEARING THE EMBARRASSING WORDS, HE ACTED IN ANGER WITHOUT THINKING. HE HAD THOUGHT THAT SHE MUST HAVE BEEN INVOLVED WITH WHAT HAD HAPPENED TO THE TWO QINGCHENG APPRENTICES, SO HE GRABBED AT HER ARM AT FULL STRENGTH. WHEN HE HEARD THE GIRL'S SCREAM, HE REALIZED HE HAD MADE A TERRIBLE MISTAKE.
WHY'S IT A LITTLE GIRL?!

YOU BROKE MY ARM! MOMMY, MY ARM IS BROKEN! WAAH, IT HURTS! IT HURTS!
WAAH, IT HURTS! WAAH...!
IT'S BROKEN ALREADY. YOU BEAT ME UP. A GROWNUP BEATS UP A KID. SHAME ON YOU!
STOP CRYING! YOUR ARM IS NOT BROKEN. IT WON'T BREAK JUST LIKE THAT!
HUH?!
YOUNG HUNCH-BACK, COME WITH ME!

MOMMY!
WAAAH!

HOW COULD YOU BULLY A LITTLE GIRL LIKE THAT? YOU CALL YOURSELF A HERO?


ALTHOUGH YU CHANGHAI IS A MAN WHO HAVE WEATHERED THROUGH PLENTY, OF ADVERSITIES AND SURVIVED A LOT OF BATTLES THIS WAS THE FIRST TIME HE FOUND HIM SELF IN SUCH AN EMBARRASSING POSITION KNOWING, THAT HE HAD INCURRED THE PUBLIC S WRATH HE COULDN'T HELP BUT QUIETELY SEETHE IN ANGER

GOOD CHILD, WHERE DOES IT HURT? LET ME HAVE A LOOK I WILL HEAL IT FOR YOU
THE LITTLE GIRL IS JUST FEIGNING THINGS MY MASTER'S HAND DID NOT EVEN TOUCH YOUR SLEEVE SO HOW COULD HE HAVE BROKEN YOUR ARM?
IT WAS THE TURTLE! THE TURTLE DID IT!
IF YOUR MASTER DID NOT TOUCH HER ARM AT ALL THEN WHENCE COME THESE BRUISE MARKS?
HAHAHA!!!

LITTLE SISTER, WHERE ARE YOU FROM? WHERE ARE YOUR MOM AND DAD?
BROTHER LIU, IS SHE WITH YOU?
THE QINGCHENG SECT'S BEST MOVE AND IS CALLED 'ASSES ON GROUND ROLLING BACKWARDS TO FELL GEESE'
THEY SAID THAT LATER THERE WOULD BE A GOOD SHOW, TWO GUYS WOULD FLY OUT AND THEN LIE STILL. THEY SAID THIS IS
MY MOM AND DAD WENT AWAY FOR SOMETHING ELSE THEY TOLD ME TO SIT HERE AND NOT GO ANYWHERE.
PFFT

ONE TIMES TWO IS TWO; TWO TIMES TWO IS FOUR; THREE TIMES TWO IS SIX; FOUR TIMES TWO IS EIGHT; FIVE TIMES TWO IS TEN...

WHAT'S YOUR FATHER'S NAME? DID HE TEACH YOU THOSE WORDS?

I AM ASKING YOU A QUES-TION HERE!

DON'T BE AFRAID! GOOD CHILD DON'T BE SCARED

WAAH!

WHY ARE YOU SCARING A KID LIKE THAT?

WHAT KIND OF A HERO ARE YOU IF YOU ONLY HIDE SNEAK AROUND AND DIRECT A LITTLE CHILD TO UTTER SUCH NONSENSE?
A TRUE MAN ACTS OPENLY! WHICHEVER FRIEND WANTS TO BE HARD ON ME BETTER SHOW YOURSELF!

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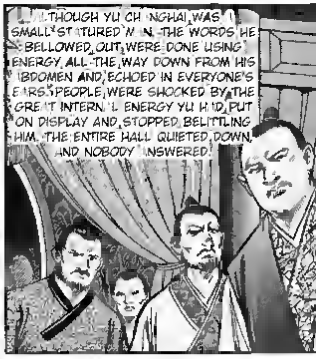

...THOUGH YU CHONGHAI WAS SMALL IN STATURE, WHEN THE WORDS HE BELLOWED OUT WERE DONE USING ENERGY, ALL THE WAY DOWN FROM HIS ABDOMEN AND ECHOED IN EVERYONE'S EARS. PEOPLE WERE SHOCKED BY THE GREAT INTERNAL ENERGY YU HAD PUT ON DISPLAY AND, STOPPED BELITTLING HIM. THE ENTIRE HALL QUIETED DOWN AND NOBODY ANSWERED!

THE QINGCHENG SECT HAD MANY HEROES IN THE PREVIOUS GENERATIONS

ESTEEMED MASTER, HE ASKED WHAT KIND OF HERO THAT WAS. ARE THE PEOPLE OF THE QINGCHENG SECT HEROES?

HE SAW SOMEONE WHO IS ALREADY BADLY INJURED AND SAID PERSON IS EVEN A GOOD GUY, YET INSTEAD OF HELPING HIM OUT, HE EVEN ATTACKED THE WOUNDED MAN

MASTER PRIEST OF THE QING-CHENG SECT. YOU HAVE A DISCIPLE CALLED LUO RENJIE, RIGHT?

.....

AND IS THAT THE KIND OF VIRTUE BEING TAUGHT AT QINGCHENG SECT?
WOULD A MAN LIKE LUO RENJIE BE CONSIDERED HEROIC?

YI LIN'S ENTIRE BODY STARTED TO TREMBLE. SHE FELT GRATEFUL TOWARD THE LITTLE GIRL. SHE HAD ALWAYS WANTED TO ASK YU CANGHAI THE SAME QUESTION, BUT BEING A GENTLE AND KIND GIRL THAT ALWAYS RESPECTED THE ELDERS AND SENIORS, SHE SIMPLY COULD NOT CONFRONT YU CANGHAI, A SENIOR. NOW THAT THE LITTLE GIRL HAD SPOKEN THEM OUT FOR HER, TEARDROPS STARTED TO RUN DOWN HER CHEEKS.

NO, MASTER YU. THIS IS THE FIRST TIME I'VE MET HER, SHE'S CERTAINLY NOT FROM OUR SECT.

AH, THAT'S RIGHT! IT WAS AT THE INN!

IT FEELS LIKE I HAVE SEEN THIS LASS SOMEWHERE BEFORE

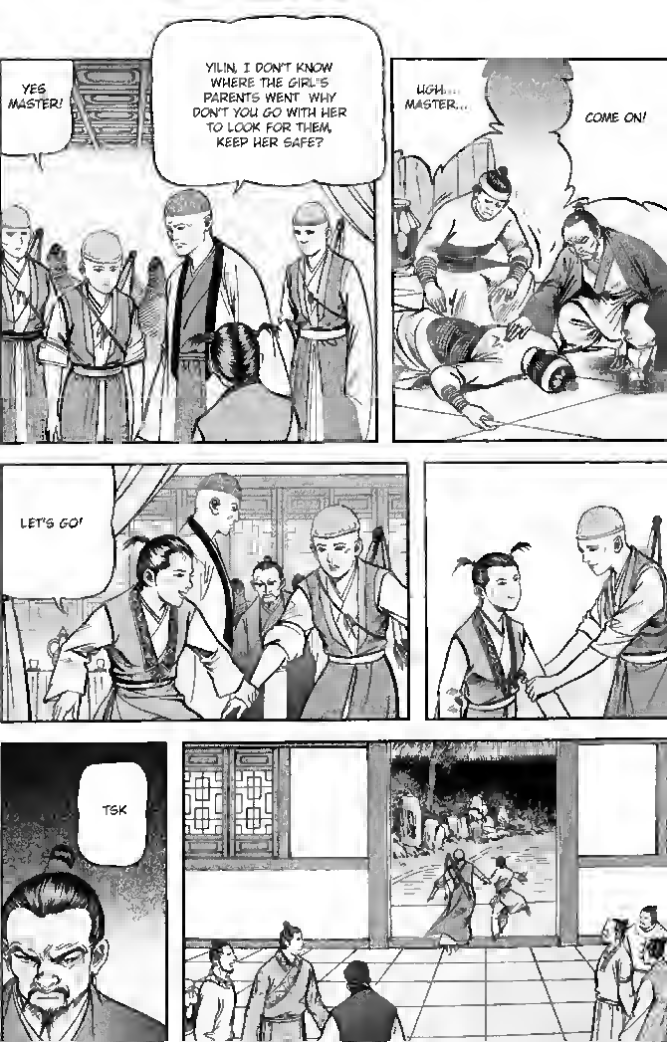
BY THE TIME TIAN BOGUANG KILLED ONE OF THE DISCIPLES FROM MT TAI SECT, MOST OF THE CUSTOMERS HAD ALREADY BEEN SCARED AWAY, BUT I VAGUELY RECALL THERE WERE STILL ABOUT 2 TABLES THAT REMAINED OCCUPIED. ONE OF THEM SAT THE LASS AND A MAN

WHILE THE OTHER TABLE SAT A MONK DRINKING WINE

WATCH OUT!
YOU! REFUSE TO ADMIT?! FINE!

WAAH, SOMEONE'S TRYING TO KILL ME!
WAAH!
HEH, YU CHANGHAI THAT OLD PRIEST WAS JUST TRYING TO SCOPE OUT HER MARTIAL ARTS SKILLS

YOU CLEARLY KNOW MARTIAL ARTS SO WHY ALL THE FARCE?!
STILL GOING BY HER NIMBLE MOVEMENT JUST NOW SHE CERTAINLY HAS SOME SKILLS BUT SHE JUST ACTED LIKE A SPOILED CHILD ANYWAY
MASTER YU, PLEASE! THERE'S REALLY NO NEED TO GO THIS FAR WITH A CHILD!
THE PEOPLE GATHERED HERE ARE ALL PUGILISTS IF I KEEP GETTING INVOLVED WITH THIS BRAT, IT'D JUST REFLECT EVEN WORSE FOR OUR SECT!


YES MASTER!
YILIN, I DON'T KNOW WHERE THE GIRL'S PARENTS WENT. WHY DON'T YOU GO WITH HER TO LOOK FOR THEM. KEEP HER SAFE?
UGH... MASTER...
COME ON!
LET'S GO!
TSK

THEY'RE GONE!
WHERE'S MU GAOFENG AND THAT GRAND-SON OF HIS?
ANYWAY YOU MUST BE TIRED FROM THE JOURNEY I HAVE PREPARED YOUR ROOMS FOR YOU MY MEN WILL LEAD YOU TO YOUR ROOMS FOR A REST WHILE TONIGHT'S BANQUIET IS BEING PREPARED
DEAR ESTEEMED GUESTS I SINCERELY APOLOGIZE FOR THE COMMOTION THAT HAS HAPPENED!
GO AND KEEP A CLOSE EYE ON THAT GIRL AND THAT NUN.
PENG RENG!
YES MASTER.

WHO ON EARTH IS THAT GIRL? AND MORE IMPORTANTLY WHO THE HELL IS IT PLOTTING AGAINST ME IN THE SHADOWS...?!
OUTSIDE MT. HENG CITY

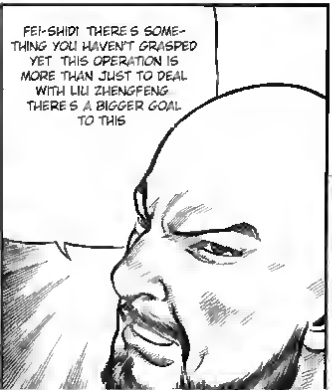
MASTER DING MASTER LU!
DING MIAN
LU BAI
HMM

FEI BIN
HOW'S THINGS AT LIU ZHENGFENG'S PLACE?
MT SONG SECT ZUO LENGCAN'S 4TH SHIDI
YOU'RE BACK!
PROCEEDING SMOOTHLY THE GUESTS FROM VARIOUS SECTS HAVE ARRIVED AND LIU ZHENG-FENG IS BUSY TENDING TO THEM

SHIXIONG = ANOTHER WAY OF ADDRESSING A SENIOR FELLOW DISCIPLE, SAME MEANING AS SHIGE.

ZUO-SHIXIONG HAS ALREADY ORDERED US TO LAY LOW AND TO ONLY TAKE ACTION WHEN LIU ZHENGFENG BEGINS HIS RETIREMENT CEREMONY.
WE DON'T WANT TO RAISE SUSPICION, SO IT'S BEST TO KEEP TO THIS PLACE AND DON'T GO TO THE CITY.

EVER SINCE WE REACHED SOUTH MT HENG WE'VE ALL JUST BEEN CAMPING OUT AT THIS BROKEN DOWN HOUSE. IT'S REALLY BORING IN HERE.
HOW MUCH LONGER DO WE HAVE TO STAY COOPED UP IN THIS DAMNED PLACE?


FEI-SHIDI! THERE'S SOMETHING YOU HAVEN'T GRASPED YET. THIS OPERATION IS MORE THAN JUST TO DEAL WITH LIU ZHENGFENG. THERE'S A BIGGER GOAL TO THIS.

A BIGGER GOAL?!

THE DAY BEFORE WE SET OFF, ZUO-SHIXIONG SAID THIS TO ME...

DING-SHIDI, WE WHO LIVE IN THE WORLD OF PUGILISTS DEPENDS UPON OUR TWO FISTS

BUT IN ORDER TO USE OUR FIST, WE FIRST NEED TO ENSURE ALL 5 FINGERS ARE NICELY CLENCHED TOGETHER!

DO YOU UNDERSTAND WHAT ZUO-SHIXIONG MEANT BY CLENCHING OF THE FIST (GRASPING POWER)?
FIVE FORCES CONSOLIDATING AS ONE!
HAS ZUO-SHIXIONG FINALLY DECIDED TO MAKE HIS MOVE?

INDEED! AFTER OVER 10 YEARS OF MANAGING THE ALLIANCE OF THE 5, ZUO-SHIXIONG'S GREAT PLAN IS FINALLY GOING TO BE PUT INTO ACTION!
OUR CURRENT OPERATION IS BUT THE BEGINNING!
SOON, OUR MT SONG SECT WILL REIGN SUPREME IN THE MARTIAL ARTS REALM!

ALL LIU ZHENG-FENG HAD BEEN FOCUSING ON WAS TRYING TO CAST ASIDE ALL THE TURMOIL AND GRUDGES OF THE MARTIAL ARTS REALM
BUT HE WOULD NEVER HAVE DREAMT THAT HIS RETIREMENT CEREMONY WOULD BE THE SPARK OF A MAJOR BLOODSHED IN THE WORLD OF PUGILISTS!